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HOLY BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION,

AND

THE LORD'S SUPPER,



# BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION,

AND

## THE LORD'S SUPPER;

AS INTERPRETED BY THEIR OUTWARD SIGNS.

THREE EXPOSITORY ADDRESSES

FOR PAROCHIAL USE.

BY THE

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THE special method followed in these expositions is that indicated in the title. Taking the signs which present themselves to the eye in the administration of the two Sacraments and of Confirmation, I endeavour to set forth their natural and historical meaning, and so to arrive at the spiritual realities of which they are signs. This seems to be at once the safest and the most instructive method of considering a sacramental ordinance.

The Addresses on Confirmation and the Lord's Supper are, in the main, reprints of tracts which were published some years ago. The three now issued together embrace the principal elements of a Christian man's belief.

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE WORD “ SACRAMENT.”

THE sense which has been given to the word “ Sacrament ” in our Church Catechism, and in which it is now commonly used, is not that which it bore when it was first applied to Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. It was a Roman word, denoting the oath of allegiance taken by soldiers. The great Christian ordinances were called Sacraments, partly as solemn ceremonies, partly because they were public pledges of loyalty towards the Lord Jesus Christ. But the inherent nature of the institutions which received this name by degrees imparted a new sense to the word “ Sacrament.” It came to mean an outward religious ceremony, *in which a spiritual meaning was clothed*. So far as the mere word is concerned, there is no reason why there should be only two, or only seven Sacraments. But in the ecclesiastical usage of the Church of England, the name has been assigned exclusively to Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, in order to separate these distinctly from other Church ordinances. What is really characteristic of them is

their having been "ordained by Christ Himself." That is to say, we find in the Gospels express narratives of the ordaining of these, and of these only, as universal ceremonies, by the word and act of the Lord Jesus. It has seemed clearly right that ceremonies so appointed should hold a rank to which no others can lay claim.

But it is well to remember that neither the word "Sacrament," nor any equivalent to it, occurs in Scripture. Christ commanded that his disciples should meet together to feed upon bread and wine as representing His Body and Blood; and He also commanded that a Baptism should be administered universally in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The ordinances in which these commands were carried out came to be called Sacraments; and it was perceived that the character they have in common is this, that Divine Grace is in both expressed through earthly symbols. So that a Sacrament is now defined as an outward sign of invisible grace. But in coming to the consideration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as they were ordained by Christ, and as they are administered in the Church, it is not necessary to embarrass ourselves at the outset with questions as to any Sacramental theory.

## HOLY BAPTISM.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

Every one is interested in understanding the meaning of that Baptism which stands at the door of the Church of Christ. We have all been baptized ; nearly all of us in unconscious infancy. When we come to years of intelligence it is natural that we should ask, "What was it that was then done to us? Now that we are free agents, shall we ratify or shall we disavow the act of our parents and sponsors?" Some of us, who have thought but little of our own baptism, have children born to us ; and then custom, supported by the blended force of affection and religion, bids us bring them to the baptismal font. Or you may be asked to become godfathers or godmothers to a friend's child. At such times we must specially desire to know what this ceremony is in which we and those dear to us are about to parti-

cipate. I invite you, therefore, to join me in inquiring, what, for simple practical Christians, is the significance of Holy Baptism?

### THE ESSENTIAL FORMS OF BAPTISM.

Perhaps the most natural way of entering upon this inquiry is to recall to our minds what it is that we see and hear when the Sacrament of Baptism is administered. In doing so it is necessary to distinguish between that which properly constitutes Christian Baptism, and the accessories which are attached to it in our services. Inasmuch as we refer the two Sacraments to the direct institution of Christ, we shall find all that is essential to Christian Baptism in the words in which Christ commanded it. Just before His ascension, He spoke thus to His disciples: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*" The meaning of the word "to baptize" was, to dip in water, or to pour water upon. Accordingly, that which constitutes a valid baptism, is the act of dipping into water or pouring water upon any person, accompanied by the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of

the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The Church of England in its rubric gives precedence to the more significant method of immersion, allowing the easier act of pouring water on the person who is to be baptized as an exception where it may be found desirable. But the use of the Church has made the latter process almost universal. It is directed that the baptizing person shall be an ordained minister of the Church; but our Church has not ventured to pronounce any baptism invalid, by whomsoever performed, in which *water* and *the sacred words* have been used. The two questions which the minister is directed to ask, when there is any doubt that "some things essential to this Sacrament may happen to have been omitted through fear or haste in a time of extremity," are (1) "With what matter was this child baptized?" (2) "With what words was this child baptized?"

It has been thought expedient and edifying that in the regular administration of this Sacrament other conditions should be added. It is to take place in the Church. By preference, it should be in the presence of a congregation. A service comprising addresses, prayers, and a portion of Scripture, is read by the minister. A more important circumstance is that the person to be baptized is called upon to make a confession of his faith in the terms of the oldest

and simplest of the Church's Creeds, and also to undertake certain engagements corresponding to the privileges conferred upon him. The case of adult baptism being exceptional and rare in a Christian country, the confession is commonly made through sponsors, who speak in the name of the infant unable to answer for himself; and these sponsors, called godfathers and godmothers, are expected to see that the child admitted in infancy to the fellowship of Christ's religion, shall have a Christian education. It is possible for these accessories to the Sacrament to overshadow, in the eyes of the spectators, the Sacrament itself. To many persons, for example, the institution of sponsors has seemed a principal part of Baptism. But it is not included in what Christ Himself ordained; and in the eyes of the whole Christian Church a baptism without sponsors is a complete baptism. The outward visible sign or form in the Sacrament of Baptism is simply "Water, wherein the person is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

We thus, if I may say so, clear the ground for our inquiry into the significance of this Sacrament. The most important, indeed the only essential, ideas involved in it must be represented by its permanent and universal elements. In considering these we need not find any difficulty in the permitted alter-



native of baptizing by dipping or by pouring. We are to see the full meaning of the one in the other. The Church of England concedes the higher significance of the less convenient process. If any one insists on perceiving any theological difference between the two practices, we say at once the Church of England doctrine is most completely represented by immersion.

Let us assume, then, that there are two essential elements in Christian Baptism—the water, and the sacred formula: and let us ask first what *the water* means.

### THE USE OF WATER.

There can be no doubt that the primary and simple idea of the baptismal use of water is that of *washing* or *cleansing*. There are two great natural uses of water; it serves for drinking and for washing. The former use has had high spiritual applications; but it is the *cleansing* property of water which is brought before us in Baptism.

This symbolism is not arbitrary or peculiar to the Christian Faith. It rises spontaneously to the apprehensions of mankind. Everywhere the purifying use of water has been an easily understood symbol for the cleansing of that inward nature which the

outward element of water cannot touch. As the outward man becomes foul, so does the inward man become foul. The outward man can be washed with water and cleansed: can the inward man become clean also? . . . That is the thought with which men's hearts and consciences have always been exercised: and when they have believed that by any power the spirit of a man could be cleansed, they have had recourse to the outward sign of water even more naturally than to the simplest words as the symbol or mark of that cleansing.

Let me offer some examples of the Scriptural interpretation of this symbolism. Under the law of Moses numerous purifications were prescribed for those who were to appear before the Lord. Thus, for the hallowing of Aaron and his sons to minister in the priest's office before the Lord, it was commanded, "Thou shalt bring them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and *shalt wash them with water*" (Ex. xxix. 4). And again, there was to be a laver of brass full of water between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and it was commanded, "Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat. When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not." For solemn occasions, such as the sacrifice of the Day of Atone-

ment, and to remove special causes of uncleanness, there were to be special washings in pure or running water, and sometimes a bunch of hyssop was to be dipped in water, like a brush, and with it the person to be purified was to be sprinkled. Alluding to this, David says, in Psalm li., "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean : wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

The real cleansing power represented by these ceremonial purgations must have been always understood, with more or less of clearness, to be GOD'S FORGIVENESS. The words of that Psalm alone—so deep and permanently true as an utterance of human contrition before God—would prove this sufficiently. "Have mercy upon me, O God," says the penitent sinner, "according to thy loving-kindness ; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions ; and my sin is ever before me." What is it that the suppliant needs for his cleansing, but the forgiveness of God, brought home to his burdened conscience and afflicted heart ? We must hold this fast, as the primary power of purification to the spirit of man. The inward man, foul with sin, must first be washed clean *by the pardoning mercy of God.*

The Prophets, as we might expect, contain many offers of such cleansing. Thus in Isaiah (i. 18) we read, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." In Ezekiel (xxxvi. 25), after promises of national restoration, the Lord says, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." And Zechariah has the remarkable saying, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" (xiii. 1).

Perhaps these and the like promises, combined with the prophecy that the Lord at his coming should "sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and should purify the sons of Levi" (Mal. iii. 2, 3), gave rise to an expectation which seems to have prevailed amongst the Jews, that the coming of the Messiah would be inaugurated with a baptism. The baptism of John appears to have been accepted by his countrymen as appropriate to the task of the messenger whom the Lord sent before to prepare His way. And when John, in answering the curiosity of the Pharisees, baffled it by declaring that he was not Elias (not being Elias himself, but having come

nevertheless as an Elias—in the spirit and power of Elias), they asked him, “*Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?*”—implying, it would seem, that the expected Elias would rightly connect a baptism with his message.

But, whether any such baptism was looked for or not, we know that the coming of the Son of God was actually heralded by a baptism so conspicuous that it gave to His forerunner his characteristic title. And the baptism of John was simple and distinctly interpreted, and on all accounts is deserving of our careful consideration.

The Gospel record concerning the Baptist is, that he proclaimed the baptism *of repentance for the remission of sins*. The declaration of this Baptism accompanied his announcement, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The kingdom of heaven—the manifestation of God and of the Messiah, was near; so the Baptist proclaimed: therefore, let all who were willing to wait for it and receive it, come to him repenting of their sins, and they should have their sins forgiven; God Himself, through His servant, giving them an authoritative seal of pardon in that outward washing with water to which they were invited to submit themselves. The baptism was offered and received as a real token of cleansing

through forgiveness. Those who came to it confessed themselves to be sinners, needing pardon and purification. The voice of the Baptist said, "As I dip your bodies in the running water, so the Lord God washes your spirits in the stream of His forgiveness : be clean henceforth in God's sight."

The short narratives of St. John's work permit us to see how honestly and vigorously he dealt with the spirits of those who came to him. Under his power, men of all classes were made to feel and confess just those sins of which they were really guilty, and to desire amendment according to their practical duty and circumstances. There was nothing affected or sentimental, or merely religious, in the repentance which he evoked. In the hands of such a servant of God, the Baptism which he administered must have gone with Divine reality and power to men's hearts. They must have descended into the water with sorrow and self-reproach humbling them before God : they must have risen out of it with a thankful sense of having left their sins behind them ; God's loving mercy having washed them from their consciences and from His remembrance. And this was the appointed preparation for the kingdom of Heaven. That kingdom was essentially a spiritual kingdom—a kingdom of holiness and truth and peace. It was a revelation of God's righteousness and love, which only the pure

in heart could behold. And, therefore, it was necessary that those who would prepare themselves for it should be *cleansed*—should be softened and humbled into the desire of forgiveness, and should receive the blessed assurance of it.

In His discourse with Nicodemus, our Lord mentions “water” in a way which all readers take to refer to a baptism. “Except a man be born *of water* and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” We probably ought to remember in reading these words what John the Baptist was at the time doing and saying,—his announcement of the approaching kingdom, and his baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Jesus was seeking to explain to Nicodemus the spiritual nature of the kingdom which He Himself had begun to proclaim in the same terms as the Baptist. Nicodemus was evidently ready to give some kind of support to the establishment of the kingdom, not knowing its true nature, but conceiving of it in a carnal and worldly spirit. Our Lord taught him that the first thing for him must be to bow his neck and become as a little child; to be begotten anew with life from God on high, if he would behold the kingdom of heaven. John was still administering his baptism of preparation for the kingdom; and the disciples of Jesus for a time carried on the same baptism: everything was

still in a preparatory stage. Our Lord therefore appears to say to Nicodemus, If you would enter the kingdom which is now being proclaimed, you must confess yourself to be a sinner in company with the vilest and most despised ; you must long for God's forgiveness ; you must submit to the washing which treats you as unclean, and in which you bless God as a gracious and forgiving God. Being thus born of water, you must receive the Spirit which makes you God's child—a spirit of holiness, and hope, and truth ; and then you will be able really to enter into that kingdom which has those who are like little children for its subjects. “Of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

The Baptism of St. John embodies for all time the twofold idea of man's uncleanness and of the power of God's forgiveness to purge away that uncleanness. It expresses repentance in those who submit to it, remission of sins in God who bestows it. Preceding, as it did, our blessed Lord's Ministry and the establishment of His heavenly kingdom upon the earth, it proclaimed that man, as impure and sinful, could not approach God, but that God was drawing men to Himself by making them clean. And it testified that all alike must humble themselves to receive God's pardon as sinners who needed it ; not only Gentiles and outcasts, not only the ignorant and irreligious,



but the proudest Pharisees, masters in Israel like Nicodemus, who thought of themselves rather as patrons and supporters of the Divine kingdom than as subjects of it. He who refused the Baptism as not needing it could not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

After this testimony of the baptism of John had been so broadly and so deeply stamped upon the minds of the Jews, and in particular of the disciples of Jesus, it would not have been easy to separate from the act of baptism the confession of sin to be purged away and the hope of God's forgiveness. It appears that, after the ministry of the Baptist terminated, baptism was no longer administered, as it had been at first, by the followers of Jesus. For a while, there was a pause in the use of this outward token. When it was revived again, in the hands of the servants of the risen Jesus, after the coming down of the Holy Ghost, the act of baptizing had received a new significance, given to it by the preaching which accompanied it and by the sacred formula incorporated into it by Christ's command. But the washing with water, though it had taken on new meaning, had not lost its old meaning. It was still right to view it according to the universal human instinct, and according to the definite interpretation given to it in the baptism of John. When St. Peter, on the Day of

Pentecost, had testified in the power of the Spirit to his risen Lord, and the multitude who heard him were pierced through in their hearts by sorrow and repentance, and asked humbly and wistfully of the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" the answer of St. Peter embodied the old message of the Baptist. He said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." So the baptism of the new society was still a baptism *of repentance for the remission of sins*. Still God was proclaimed as a being at the same time holy and merciful—as one of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, but also as merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. Men were invited by the new baptism to draw near to God, but they were taught that they must leave their sins behind them. Repentance and faith were the states of mind proper to those who were admitted by baptism into the fellowship of Christ's religion; repentance whereby they forsook sin, and faith whereby they steadfastly believed the pardoning and reconciling promises of God made to them in that Sacrament.

In agreement with this testimony, we find allusions in the writings of the Apostles to the washing or cleansing by which Christ consecrated His body and

its members, and presented it to the Father. St. Paul says that Christ "loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." He speaks of God as having saved us according to his mercy, "by the washing or laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." And St. Peter declares that "a baptism, or washing, doth now save us,—not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God—by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

And in similar harmony, whereas the Apostles' Creed bids us say simply, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins;" the Nicene Creed, without intending to change the object of belief, translates this article into "I believe in one Baptism for the remission of sins,"—calling attention to the great universal Sacrament as the authentic and continuous organ of that forgiving love of God which was manifested in Jesus Christ His Son. And the prayer by which the water of our font is blessed or consecrated to its sacramental use is this: "Sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin."

This, then, Christian brethren, is one primary voice to us of that ordinance by which we were admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion. It proclaims our God to be one who cleanses us from sin by His

love, in order that we may approach His holiness. Let not our ears become deaf or dull to this voice. Let us behold God in His unspeakable heavenly purity ; but let us behold Him also in that kindness and love towards man with which He puts away our sin, and draws us in faith, cleansed in that faith and humility and thankfulness, to His own bosom. Let us draw near then, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

It is true that we sin and defile ourselves daily, and that the Sacramental washing has been given us once, and at a time when we were incapable of committing actual sin. But the washing was given once, in order that we may feel God's purifying love to be ever about us, at each and any moment ready to put away the sin of the penitent and to restore to them the cleanness of a little child. The Sacrament of Baptism is not to be repeated upon any person ; if it had been an ordinance of repeated use, might we not have been tempted to use it in a superstitious and ungodly spirit, allowing ourselves in sin during the intervals of cleansing, and trusting to the remission which was at hand ? But now our baptism has sealed us once for all as children of the Divine forgiveness. God is always to us a pardoning God and Father ; our right state is to be always depending on

His love, thanking Him for His mercy, holding our cleanness only in His grace. Our true condition—the true condition of all baptized Christians—is that of those who are forgiven and are therefore pure, and may approach the God of grace. If we fall from this state, our hope and duty lie in returning to it. Nothing hinders us, because God is inherently a gracious Being, one whose very nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive.

That we may be held back from committing sin and from allowing it in our inmost hearts; that there may be a witness against us when we defile that which God has made pure; that we may have a stimulus and encouragement to return to our baptismal state of grace and salvation,—let us say to ourselves humbly but firmly, Whatever the natural state of man may be, whatever pollutions may have stained our human nature, whatever defilement we by our own fault, by our own grievous fault, may have contracted, we, being baptized Christians, are washed, we are sanctified. What God has cleansed, it is not for us to call common.

### THE THREEFOLD NAME.

If the question asked by St. Paul of the disciple at Ephesus, “Unto what were you baptized?” should

be addressed to a Christian, the true answer to it is supplied by the appointed words of the Sacrament itself. He would reply, "*I was baptized into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.*" These sacred words determine the whole significance of Christian Baptism. The use of water does not indeed lose its proper meaning. It continues to set forth a cleansing, wrought by the forgiveness of God brought home to the conscience. But, just as an outward washing does not produce or constitute anything, but merely removes what disfigured the object that is washed, and so restores it to the proper state belonging to its own nature, similarly, the spiritual washing only removes defilement from the spirit, leaving the true state of the spirit, when cleansed, to be determined by that force, whatever it is, to which the spirit owes its being.

We are to see, then, in that end or issue of our baptism denoted by the words, "I baptize thee into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," the state or condition into which we are called as Christians. The washing implies that we are sinners, and that we can only realize our vocation through the putting away of our sin.

St. Paul's question, "*Unto what* were you baptized, if you have not known the Holy Ghost?" implies that it was usual to connect the significance of a

Baptism with *some definite issue*. It was regarded as a fitting introduction to some discipleship or divine vocation. Our translation has done something to obscure the plainness of this idea by rendering in various ways what is in the original the same preposition. The issue of the Baptism is denoted by exactly the same phrase in the expressions :—"The Baptism of repentance *into*, or unto, remission of sins ;" "Baptizing them *into* the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ;" "'They were baptized *into* the Name of the Lord Jesus ;" "As many of us as were baptized *into* Jesus Christ."

But these last expressions remind us that in the Apostolic history it was usual to speak of the Name of *the Lord Jesus*, rather than of the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as that into which believers were baptized. It is not to be supposed that our Lord's command was neglected, and that in the actual administration of Baptism the form of words which He appointed was changed for some other. Such a treatment by the Apostles of their Master's last injunction is highly improbable. It may rather be assumed that the expression "to be baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus," was a conventional way of describing Christian baptism. If we, in this day, have occasion to mention the baptism of any heathen

persons, or, indeed, of infants or others amongst ourselves, we do not naturally repeat the sacred formula. We speak, perhaps, of their becoming baptized Christians, or of their being received into the Church of Christ by baptism. In the Apostolic age, the conspicuous act on the part of those who were baptized was that they became disciples of Jesus Christ; they accepted the Crucified as Lord. But the name of Jesus Christ could not, in the eyes of the believers, *take the place* of the Threefold Name; it rather suggested and implied it. For Jesus Christ was always preached as essentially the Son of the Father; He had come to manifest the Father, and to bring men to the Father; and His exaltation, after His victory over death, was associated with an outpouring of the Holy Ghost. His followers were bound together by a life which they referred to the Holy Spirit, who came from the Father and the Son. Generally, the very act of baptism was accompanied by manifest tokens of the power of the Holy Ghost. No Christian, therefore, could contemplate the Lord Jesus without remembering both the Father and the Holy Ghost. But inasmuch as he was the Head of the Church, and had come down to earth and suffered and died and been raised again, that man might know the true God through Him the Son, therefore it was natural that the members of the new Society



should be called by His name, and should regard themselves as brought by Him into their relation with the Father and the Spirit.

But it was most necessary that even the name of the Saviour should not cause any forgetfulness of the other two names bound up in one with His. The truth upon which the Church was founded was expressed in that saying of St. Paul, "Through Christ we all have access in one Spirit to the Father." The baptismal formula expressed the same truth. This foundation was laid under the life of every Christian when he was admitted into the Church with the words, "I baptize thee into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

In considering what is implied in these words, we can have no better guide, I think, than the old familiar answers of our Church Catechism. The state into which we are called is spoken of, you will remember, as a "state of salvation." That is, it is the true, safe, healthy, and blessed state, for us and for every man. It is a state in which we could not by our own strength place ourselves, but into which our Heavenly Father calls us. It is a state in which all baptized Christians ought to desire and pray that by God's grace they may continue to the end of their lives. But *what* is this state of salvation? what are the titles and functions of those who are brought into

it? This question is answered at the beginning of the Catechism; we are there taught that in our Baptism we were made *members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.*

This is the interpretation which the Church gives us of the baptismal formula; I can hardly doubt that it was drawn directly from that formula. I have already urged, that in considering what our Baptism *is*, we are bound to strip off in our thoughts the useful accessories with which the Church has clothed it, and to fix our eyes upon that simply which Christ Himself ordained. Anything which was not directly ordained by Christ does not belong to the essential and universal form of the Sacrament. And Baptism, as Christ ordained it, was a washing with water in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Thus we study what Baptism *is*, and we ought surely to proceed in the same manner in considering what it *means*. Now, if the framers of the Catechism fixed their thoughts on the pure and essential form of the Sacrament, they would naturally seek to give some application to the baptized of each member of the Threefold Name. But whether this was their intention or not, this is evidently what they have done. To be baptized into the Name of the Father is, they teach us, to be made God's child; to be baptized into the Name of the Son is to be

made a member of Christ; to be baptized into the name of the Holy Ghost is to be made an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. These titles describe the state of salvation into which our Heavenly Father has called us.

The three titles of the baptized Christian are not indeed placed in any formal correspondence with the three Divine Names; they are brought before us in what is, perhaps, their most natural order.

The very name of Christian, and of Christening, which means making one a Christian, suggests precedence for the idea of membership in Christ. Our baptismal state involves the acceptance of Jesus Christ the Son of God as our head, and the privilege of drawing life and guidance from Him. It is of Him and of His work that the Gospel speaks to us. The preachers of the good news of God are preachers of Christ and of Him crucified. In order that we may know Him, sacred records have been given us, in which the chief facts of His life on earth, and His most memorable words, have been preserved for us. We learn from these Scriptures how Jesus manifested the Divine nature that was in Him, and in what light and character He taught His disciples to regard Him. He claimed the two great titles, Son of God and Son of man; He declared that He was as truly sent from above—the Son from eternity, one

with the Father—as He was man, bearing the sins and sorrows and temptations of mankind. His chosen disciples honoured and loved Him, and listened with awe to what He told them concerning Himself; but they did not understand Him, and when they saw Him die, they thought their hopes were crushed. But they beheld Him again, risen from the dead, and His recovered life was stamped by repeated appearances and conversations upon their minds. Then He withdrew Himself permanently from their bodily sight; but this was only that He might become the more constantly present with them in the Spirit; and the thoughts of the disciples concerning their Master underwent an immediate expansion and elevation. They now began to look upon Him as the Living Head of a Body confined by no limits. Every year they experienced some growth in their apprehensions of the nature of Christ, and of His relation to mankind; their thoughts became deeper, and at the same time they became wider. The writings of the inspired Apostles declare to us the crucified Jesus as the Word of God made flesh, as the Heir of all things, as the Lord both of the living and of the dead. They affirm that no images can describe with sufficient clearness the connexion which subsists between the spirit of a man, when in its right state of faith and dependence, and the person of the Son of

God. He is the Vine, men are the branches ; He is the Corner-stone, they are the other stones of the building ; He is the Head of the Body, they are the limbs. They feed upon Him, and He nourishes them ; He is in them, and they are in Him.

To be baptized into the Name of the Son implies to be called into this relation to Christ. It follows, therefore, as our corresponding duty, that we should look to Christ, consider Him, and cleave to Him. He gives Himself to us as our Head ; our place is that of His members. If this idea, that of membership and of all that it expresses, is one which we do not receive, we are not recognising Christ as the Gospel and the Scriptures declare Him to us. If He is not our Head and our Life, One in whom we may put our trust, we must make Him something else than that which He is in the sacred records. The Christ of the Bible and of the Church, the Christ of our Baptism, is a Living Head, and He assigns to us all the blessedness and all the subordination of being His members.

Again,—we were made at our baptism children of God, for we were baptized into the name of the Father. This is indeed involved in being made members of Christ, for the whole existence of Christ is that of Sonship to the Father. Those that are admitted into Him become of necessity children of

the Father. The sin and evil of human beings in the Saviour's eyes consisted in their straying from their Father and home. Men were erring, disobedient children; they were choosing a state of unnatural, foolish, and ruinous independence, instead of that state of filial dependence for which God had created them. The Son of God came—the love of the Father towards men sending Him—that He might bring men back to God again as His children. His task on earth was to declare perfectly the Name of the Righteous Father to men, and to win them to love and reverence. Accordingly, the voice of the Gospel was always and everywhere uttered as the voice of a Father seeking His children. We were children, St. Paul testifies, even when we “were in bondage under the elements of the world : but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons,” he adds, “God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son ; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” In very similar language he says in another place, “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear ; but ye have received the spirit of sonship, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God : and if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." This sonship, then, is conferred upon us in our being baptized into the Name of the Father. That name, when we are brought into relation with it, makes us God's children. In the Son of God we may claim all the privileges, we may surrender ourselves to all the sentiments, of sons of God.

We are bound therefore, as baptized Christians, to count ourselves God's children. God Himself calls us to this blessing, and puts upon us the responsibility of declining it. It is not without a struggle that we can hold it fast. The world, the flesh, and the devil, seek to seduce us from God's family. The world, with its shows, invites us to become its children ; the flesh, with its rebellious lusts, puts in *its* claim to our allegiance ; the evil spirit, with his works of malice and falsehood, tempts us to make him our father, and to grow like him. We must renounce all these if we would abide in the state of salvation into which we were baptized—the state of God's loving and dutiful children.

Thirdly,—we were baptized into the Name of the Holy Ghost. What this made us might have been described in terms which would have retained the name of the Holy Spirit ; but the expression, "in-

heritor of the kingdom of heaven," when it is rightly understood, points to the Holy Spirit as directly as if He had been named. For the kingdom of heaven is that Divine government and commonwealth of which we become aware through the Spirit only, and of which we cannot be loyal subjects without a work done by the Spirit of God upon our hearts. And "an inheritor" of the kingdom of heaven is one who has a title to the rights and possessions of that kingdom. To say that I am made an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven is to say that I am introduced into relations of subjection and service towards God and of union with my fellow-men, which are essentially spiritual relations. I am introduced into a world which is not of the flesh, but of the Spirit. I become the citizen of an invisible kingdom, which could not be manifested, which could not be lived in, if there were not a Spirit of God revealing God and the things of God to the spirits of men.

The society of believers in Jesus Christ, which was formed on the day of Pentecost, was the outward organization and witness of the heavenly kingdom; and this was expressly the creation of the Spirit, who then came down from heaven. From that day baptized men counted themselves as subjects of a spiritual authority, endowed with spiritual liberties, holding and looking for spiritual possessions. They



believed that a Spirit had been given, who was the animating and pervading spirit of the new state of things which was constituted in Christ. They held it their duty and their privilege to submit their hearts to one blessed Spirit of truth and unity, that He might move and quicken and purify them, and make one body in Christ of all Christ's members.

The baptism which brought *them* under the power of this Spirit has the same significance now. We are baptized still into the Name of the Holy Ghost, in order that we may open our eyes and see God's kingdom about us and in us ; that we may not regard ourselves as earthly creatures with fleshly associations only, but as heavenly creatures living an invisible life in the presence of God, and in a spiritual unity with our fellow-men. If we become as little children and enter upon our inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, we shall feel called upon to live daily our life upon this earth as subjects of the Spirit of God, whose impulses are the laws of that kingdom. Our obedience will not be a bare conformity to outward rules, but a willing submission to worthy motives, such as love, righteousness, sacrifice. We shall be compelled to think not only of what we *do* outwardly, but of what we *are* inwardly. We shall seek for the fulfilment of that promise of the new or spiritual dispensation, "I will put my laws *into their minds*,

and write them *in their hearts* ; and I will be to them a God, and *they shall be to me a people.*”

Such are a few hints, dear friends, of the reflections which the Name into which we were baptized may stir up in our minds. The fundamental principles of our faith, of our hopes, of our common life, as Christians, are discovered in the setting forth of our relation to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Do we sufficiently remember the calling thus given us? Might we not profitably ask ourselves and our fellow-Christians, in the face of our godlessness, our want of faith, our worldliness, “Unto what, then, were we baptized?”

St. Paul was accustomed to draw from Baptism a very powerful appeal to the consciences of his fellow-believers. Their baptism, he told them, bound them to be dead with Christ to the world or to sin, and to be alive with Christ unto God. He referred to what takes place in a baptism of complete immersion, when the baptized person goes out of sight for a moment, to reappear as one rising out of death. This view of St. Paul’s requires some consideration, because it appears to be a quite different interpretation of the outward image of baptism from that which we should learn from other parts of Scripture. We have seen that the use of water was to suggest cleansing—not a drowning and restoring to life again.

This is, in fact, an example, and not a solitary one, of an application of an external image, which would be fanciful only if it was not supported by real spiritual truth. The method of baptism which prevailed in St. Paul's time—a complete immersion in a stream or cistern—would no doubt suggest the idea which St. Paul derives from it. It might lead any spectator to think of being buried with Christ in His death, and of rising again with His life. But it is also true that this was not the idea primarily and universally intended by baptism, which was that of cleansing. Nowhere, I think, in the Sacred Writings, except in those of St. Paul, is baptism claimed as setting forth the idea of a death and of a new birth. But any use of a figure is justifiable where the thing intended is substantially true. And it *did* belong to the very nature of Baptism to claim the Christian as dead with Christ, and risen again with Christ. This twofold law was impressed upon the life of the Christian, not by the washing in itself, but by the baptism into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Son, who was the Way to the Father, and who poured out the Holy Spirit upon His Church, was always and necessarily proclaimed as the Lord who had died and risen again for men. When He showed Himself in the Spirit to John at Patmos, the account which He

gave of Himself was this: "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Therefore, when men were baptized into Christ, and so *put on* Christ, they put on the nature of One who had died and risen again for them. He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but to Him who died and rose again for them. It belonged to the very essence of the relation of the believing man to Christ that he should be made conformable to His death, and learn the power of His resurrection. The customary mode of Baptism set forth—accidentally, we may say—this fellowship with the Death and Resurrection of Christ; and, therefore, St. Paul took advantage of it as an instructive symbol, not in any degree resting the truth upon the outward image, but simply using an analogy which offered itself to impress the truth upon the imagination.

It is true, I believe, to Scripture to give no higher authority than this to St. Paul's view of Baptism, as a going down into death and rising up out of it; and certainly the modern practice of the Church makes it our interest to do so. For if it belonged to the proper significance of Baptism that it should thus set forth a fellowship with Christ's Death and Resur-

rection, we should be culpably lax in admitting the liberty of pouring water upon the person instead of immersion. But the fact is, that the proper universal meaning of the use of water is the cleansing of the heart and conscience through Divine forgiveness, and, at the same time, that all St. Paul's doctrine is involved in our being baptized into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Let me now only add a few words upon the close connexion between the washing, thus understood, and the state or calling set forth by the sacred formula. It is implied that when God's forgiving love reaches us and lays hold of us, it places us at once, through purification, in that relation to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, which we may speak of in one word as *sonship unto God*. The *grace* of our baptism, then, is that which constitutes us sons of God. The fountain of this grace is in God's will towards us. The creative will of God makes us His children. Our sin, that with which we make ourselves unclean before God, is the denial and forfeiture of our standing as God's children. When the redeeming love of our Heavenly Father comes forth towards us, it seeks us as His children, and desires to restore us to a conscious and fruitful enjoyment of that relation towards God. In this aim it encounters *our sin*—that self-will which disfigures and defiles and

betrays us—and it refuses to be overcome by it. The love of God—His adopting grace to us—speaks to us in the midst of our sinfulness; calls to us with a Fatherly and a Brotherly voice; declares that the Holy and Righteous God cares for us, though sinners; that His mind is one of forgiveness and forbearance towards us; and that if we will return we shall find a welcome. The Father's love is manifested in Jesus Christ as a power to conquer all despair, all stubbornness, all ingrained pollution. We are invited to wash ourselves clean in the pardoning mercy of God through Christ.

We think rightly of Christian baptism, therefore, when we hear it testifying primarily of that relationship towards God which has its root in the Eternal Grace of the Divine Will, and when we see it secondarily washing away our guilt as an obstacle which prevents the realizing of our sonship. When our Blessed Lord was baptized, there was no guilt to wash away, but the baptism was in His case the sealing of sonship and the bestowal of the filial Spirit. The Spirit descended upon Him like a dove, and a voice from the Father proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We, being defiled, need the forgiveness of God and the assurance of that forgiveness, in order that the Fatherly voice, declaring us His children, may effectually

reach us. Our response to that grace is to confess ourselves God's children, but with the more humility and thankfulness that we are offending children who have been freely forgiven—estranged children who have been reconciled to our Father.

There is nothing more important, in our apprehension of the meaning of Baptism—and not in this only, but in the understanding of all God's ways and of our whole life and vocation—than to refer the origin of everything to the design of God's will; not stopping short at any intermediate process, but reaching out towards God Himself, and closing the chasm between Him and us with the fellowship which we have with Him in Christ. The worth of Baptism consists in its bearing witness to something that is not in itself, but in God. In this Sacrament God's fatherly voice is to be heard. Handed down from generation to generation, and repeated day by day in the Church, Baptism is, as I have said, the authentic and continuous organ of that forgiving and fatherly love of God which was perfectly manifested in Jesus Christ His Son. It is doing its work best when it raises our thoughts from itself to the eternal goodness of God. We are brought and admitted to Baptism *because* God “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself.”

I have done my best to let this Sacrament explain

itself, without regard to modern controversies. But it is not to be disguised that the customs and teaching of the Church relating to Baptism have given rise to considerable differences of opinion, and even to bitter controversy. It has sometimes happened, as an unfortunate consequence of this fact, that men's first definite notions about Baptism have been suggested by a controversy, as by that on Baptismal Regeneration, or on Infant and Adult Baptism. This is the more unfortunate, because our best hope of understanding the terms and principles involved in such controversies lies in understanding, first, the natural and historical significance of Baptism itself. And when we cannot see our way to positive conclusions, if we are conscious of holding fast the main truth, we can acquiesce more reasonably in the uncertainty or suspension of opinion which may often to many of us be the only wisdom with regard to matters which we do not thoroughly understand.

I propose now to consider briefly, in the light of those ideas which the baptismal signs have suggested to us, some of the more obvious and practical of the questions to which I have just referred. Let us take these, the necessity of Baptism ; Baptismal Regeneration ; the Baptism of Infants ; the engagements entered into by sponsors.



## THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM.

On what grounds, it may be asked, should we urge the necessity of Baptism? What warrant have we for saying to parents, "It is your duty to bring your children to be baptized"? A common and not unreasonable answer to this question is, "Christ commanded that all men should be baptized." But Christ desires us to see the wisdom and reason of His commands, as well as the fact that He has commanded. And we may see in this case, that it would imply much carelessness and disrespect towards the declaration of God's forgiving and adopting love, if we were to treat Baptism lightly. And to be careless towards the token of God's love is not far from being careless towards that love itself. God's providential goodness has constituted a Church of baptized men confessing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and He bids this Church regard itself as His family. When parents keep their children from baptism, they imply that they do not regard with reverence God's organized family, or the privilege of belonging to it. Those who are themselves baptized, and who bring their children to be received into the same fold, may say, "I rejoice to know that the Eternal God has been caring, as of old, for this

generation, and for me and my family amongst the rest. I rejoice that we are made fellow-citizens with the saints, and members of God's household. I thank God that He has not left us children of the world, isolated and wandering creatures. I thank Him for claiming us as His own children in His dear Son. I thank Him that, in fellowship with God and with one another, we have the one Spirit of the Divine Family teaching and moving us." Those who are indifferent about Baptism are cutting themselves off from these supports. They are spurning the witnesses of God's election and grace which He has Himself established upon the earth. They put away the power of addressing and bringing up their children as those whom God has openly received and by an outward intelligible act has made *His* children. And therefore we might say to them, though there are many reasons which may forbid us to say it reproachfully, "You are doing, without being aware of it, a dishonour to God. You are resisting His purpose of good for mankind. You are doing harm to your country, as the mother of Christian men and freemen. You are injuring your children, by removing them from that foundation on which God would build them up."

The view, then, that we have taken of Baptism enables us to speak quite strongly enough as to the

necessity of it, without venturing on speculations which great Christian teachers have countenanced, but which are foreign to Scripture, as to the comparative condition and the destiny in another world of the unbaptized. I would simply abstain, in good faith, from all such speculations. We may sufficiently realize the worth of Baptism, and see both the duty of the Church to offer it earnestly to the people, and the duty of the people to accept it reverently and thankfully, by dwelling upon what it is, and by thinking what the world would lose if it were taken away from us.

### BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

When we have spoken of Baptism—the washing with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—as setting forth our adoption to be God's children, Christ's members, and subjects of the Holy Spirit, we have manifestly been referring to a *life* which is not of this world—to a heavenly life and condition. This heavenly life is naturally called a *new* life. Life in the flesh and in the world is the old life; life in Christ and in the Spirit is the new life. It is very important to bring out the reality and the nature of this higher life, and

to contrast it sharply with the low condition out of which men are raised by it. Man's natural tendency is to live to self, under the power of the world and the flesh, and even the devil. God's gracious will calls him out of this state into the state in which he knows God as his Father, and seeks to be conformed to Christ, and submits to the motions of the Spirit of truth and love and sacrifice. Man could not create this better condition for himself; he could not raise himself to it. His hope and safety are in yielding to God's call, and accepting the privileges which God bestows upon him. The more urgently, therefore, God's grace is pressed upon him, and the more he is assured that all he has to do is to submit to what that grace has already done for him, the more truly is the way of God vindicated towards him. Having, then, these principles in our mind;—thinking of that better condition of fellowship with God and with men which is of God who calls and enables, and of the evil condition of slavery to appetite and passion and wicked feelings which is opposed to the other; believing that God's voice and seal really come to a human being in baptism, bestowing on him the better life and calling him to it; and seeing that the best root of a true and good life is the simple acknowledgment of that voice and seal;—we should find it natural, I believe, to speak of the regeneration, or

begetting anew to a higher life, which operates in Baptism. It is good for all baptized persons to think of themselves as regenerate; as being no more children of sin and self, but children of God and of heaven. The more they thus regard themselves, the better they are likely to act. And Baptism is the simple, universal warrant for their so regarding themselves. But if we lose sight of these things, and begin by pulling to pieces the term "regenerate," and resolve that regeneration shall mean a total change in the *character* of a person—in virtue of which we might say, that whereas he delighted in evil, he now delights in good; whereas he was an enemy to God, he now loves and serves God—we find ourselves in great difficulties. We are compelled to inquire what change does actually take place in the heart at the moment of baptism, and to what force any such change is to be attributed. We are confronted by the fact that, whilst the Church speaks of baptism as a regeneration or begetting to a higher life, many of those who are baptized are no better than if they were heathens. I do not think we can show or maintain that a change of heart and character, such as would come up to the idea of a *new birth*, takes place regularly in Baptism. I do not think that the use of the word "Regeneration" in our service implies that it does.

The question is not as to what the individual was and what he becomes *in himself*, but as to the heavenly life and the fleshly life—as to what God would make a man, and, indeed, what God in His creative idea has already made him, and what he is and will be if he remains in self. In Baptism, the higher life claims the man, embraces him, calls him its own : if he will only believe it, he is regenerate unto God, grafted into Christ's body, made a member of the Divine family. But Baptism does not *prevent* him from renouncing his heavenly birthright if he choose to do so. Whilst Baptism is saying to him, “Thou art regenerate unto God ; the Name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is upon thee ; God's tender forgiveness is about thee,” the man may still say, “I choose to be *unregenerate*, and will live as though I had not been baptized.”

I believe, then, that one whose mind is in the region of the right and simple ideas about Baptism would be led naturally to a reasonable acceptance and use of the term “regeneration” in connexion with it ; but that in such a case he will not take it as meaning that each baptized person is changed in will and affections, but as setting forth the act of God taking open possession, so to speak, of His own child, and doing everything for that child as his Father.

## THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS.

We pass easily to the next question, that of Infant Baptism. The inquiry, What change takes place within the person who is baptized? becomes in some respects easier, though in others more difficult, when it has to deal with infants. If any change takes place, it is less subject to scrutiny; it may more readily evade examination and contradiction in infants than in adults. But, on the other hand, it is difficult to conceive of a spiritual transformation taking place whilst the spirit is undeveloped and unconscious. The view we have taken of Baptism, and the regeneration set forth in it, will not compel us to think of infants as changed in character at the font. And it will in other respects justify the Catholic usage which brings unconscious infants to be baptized.

If we regarded baptism as primarily and properly a human act, as an act of confession and adhesion, we might find it difficult to justify infant baptism. It would seem reasonable that such a confession should only be made by those who have come to years of discretion, and who may be supposed, at least, to have had materials and opportunities for making up their minds. But if we are to regard baptism as merely a voluntary act of confession and

adhesion, we must get rid of those ideas which I have commended to you as the proper ideas of Baptism. Cleansing by forgiveness, calling into a heavenly life and condition, making a sinful human being a child of God and a member of Christ and a subject of the Holy Ghost,—these are not human acts; they describe something different from a man's coming forward to say, "I approve of the Christian religion and desire to join it." It is quite possible that a babe may be a fit subject of that sealing, although it is utterly incompetent to make a public profession.

There is, no doubt, something plausible in the idea that every human being should freely choose for himself his own religion, his own convictions, his own responsibilities: that at some reasonable time of his life he should have the opportunity given to him to say, "I choose the religion of my fathers, or some other religion, or no religion at all." But such a plan is opposed by strong instincts, and by the inevitable facts of human existence. It would be simply impossible to bring up a child in an unbiassed state of mind, so that he might choose without prejudice between Theism and Atheism, between Christianity and Mahometanism, between Popery and Protestantism. To attempt it would be a delusion. And no sensible parent could bear the thought of *not* teaching his child what he himself believes to be true and most



important for human life. It is an ordinance of the Creator that parents should bring up their children in the belief of what they themselves believe.

Now suppose the parents of a child to believe that God has sent His Son into the world, and after giving Him up to die has raised Him again from the dead, and that God has called out a society of men in the name of His Son Jesus Christ to be His family, confessing the one Father, the one Lord, the one Spirit of truth and love—and that they themselves by baptism have been divinely added to this body; all their parental and believing instincts will demand that their child should be received as a member of it too. Their joy will be to think, not that their child may at some time be persuaded to choose God for its Father, but that God has already chosen it for His child, and that they have a right to deal with it and to bring it up as a member of God's organized family. They will then confidently teach it, from the first years of knowledge, to speak to God in heaven as a revealed Father; to honour and to love and to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ; and to seek the constant help, and yield to the daily inspirations, of the Holy Ghost. Infant Baptism, according to the true views of what the Sacrament is and what it implies, becomes, one might almost say, *more* reasonable than adult Baptism.

It is true that there is a very grave responsibility in thus laying hold of the mind and nature of a young child, and endeavouring to train it according to certain assumptions. I would not wish that responsibility to be made light of; it would be well if it were more anxiously pondered. But you perceive that this responsibility does not belong to Baptism alone. It is involved in the mystery of parentage, and cannot be thrown off. A child will be brought up upon one assumption or another. Parents should ask themselves, "Shall we bring up our child as a child of the earth and of the world, as having no Father in heaven till it has chosen one for itself; no Saviour, no helping Spirit: *or* shall we venture to bring it up as a being already called and chosen of God?" Infant Baptism answers this inquiry, and comes to the help of the believing parents. It says with authority, "Bring your infant to the font; there he will be owned as a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

The question in truth becomes this, Whether we believe *the Gospel itself* enough to act upon it with reference to dear and precious interests? Here is the real difficulty. We are constantly tempted at the present time to speak as if religion were a mere matter of opinion, and the Church a voluntary aggregation of persons happening to think alike. But

this way of talking would have to make great changes in all the institutions of the Church, and in the Bible, before it could bring them into any harmony with itself. We in this generation have not created the Church. It has an historical existence. It was founded upon Jesus Christ. It is a body, professing to be divinely called out and preserved, which takes into itself generation after generation of Christians. Baptism does not come to us as a convenient mode of registering our religion ; it comes to us as an authentic outward act of Divine forgiveness and adoption. The other Sacrament comes to us with similarly high titles. It offers itself to us as a means of grace—an outward sign through which we men who live in the body may have fellowship with an invisible Lord and Master. We may believe the Gospel or not, as we choose ; but if we believe it, we are confessing gracious acts and purposes of the eternal God, manifested in His Son Jesus Christ, and set forth by the institutions which were founded by Christ Himself. Those who accept the redemption of the world thus declared can have no difficulty, one would think, about the baptism of infants.

## GODFATHERS AND GODMOTHERS.

I have not brought in the ordinance of sponsorship to explain and justify Infant Baptism. I do not forget that in our Church Catechism this use is made of it. In answer to the question, "Why, then, are infants baptized?" we are taught to say, Because they make the necessary promises in the persons of their sureties, being bound, when they come to age, to discharge those promises themselves. Sponsors do conveniently fulfil this office—of binding the time of unconscious infancy to the time of personal responsibility. But various circumstances—partly, perhaps, this answer in the Catechism—have led to a very mistaken exaggeration of the part which sponsors play in baptism. Many persons look upon sponsorship as an essential part of the Sacrament of Baptism. But it is not essential to Baptism. An act of baptism is perfectly valid, in the eyes of our own Church, and of the Church Catholic, without the assistance of a single sponsor. The institution of sponsorship is an example—a very pleasing and advantageous example—of the principle of mutual and common responsibility in the Church. There is an attempt to make some use of it even in the baptism of adults, where sponsors are required to be present as chosen

witnesses and friends. But the most important office of sponsors in the celebration of Infant Baptism is their being mouth-pieces, so to speak, for the confession of the responsibilities of baptized persons. The infant cannot confess those responsibilities ; and it is very important that they should always be distinctly acknowledged and expressed. But these responsibilities are not arbitrary or voluntary ; they are inherent in the Sacrament itself ; and as the Sacrament rests on the mind of God, they are inherent in God's will and in man's nature. If God's grace, as the grace of our Maker and Father, claims and owns us in a certain character, it belongs to us of necessity to conform to that character. If God calls us His children we are bound not to withdraw ourselves from His Fatherhood, nor to offer ourselves as children to any false father. If we are made members of Christ, we are bound not to deny or renounce that fellowship, but spiritually to accept Christ as our head. If we are made subjects of a spiritual kingdom, we are bound to observe the laws of that kingdom, written by the Spirit upon our hearts.

This confession of responsibilities on the part of sponsors might almost be called mechanical, except that it is made living and impressive, and is bound to the vital faith of the Church, through being uttered by Christian friends of those who are concerned.

Those responsibilities are not in any sense taken upon *themselves* by the sponsors. It was never intended that godfathers and godmothers should be more to children than their natural parents. The utmost practical duty which sponsors take upon themselves is that defined by the exhortation at the close of the Baptismal Service. They are to see that the child be taught what the responsibilities of Baptism are ; that he learn the Church Catechism and hear sermons ; that, so far as they have any means of furthering it, he be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life ; and that at the suitable age he be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed. These are services which any Christian friend, not interfering with the parents, might be glad to perform. And it is interesting and instructive for a child, as he grows into some understanding of what was done for him at his baptism, to see, in the persons of his godfathers and godmothers, witnesses of that higher life and birth by which he is claimed as a child of God and of heaven. He sees in them signs of the care of the Church on his behalf—remembrancers of the godly and Christian life which he is bound to lead. Where good sponsors can be obtained, an advantage of no trifling importance is thus, I believe, secured to a child. And the omission of sponsors would be without doubt a serious loss to

the Church and to its young members. But, I say again, sponsors are not essential to Christian or to Infant Baptism, and ought not to be mixed up with its primary significance. The responsibilities of baptized Christians are best to be learnt directly from the various aspects of the *grace* declared in Baptism—from the Fatherhood of God, from the work of Christ, from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. They might be summed up in that comprehensive principle of Christian morality, “We love Him, because He first loved us.”

## CONFIRMATION.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

THERE are not many occasions which bring the laity into personal connexion with their Bishop. But there is one great duty belonging to the Bishop's office, the discharge of which does at regular intervals bring the Bishop amongst us, and through which every orderly member of the Church comes, for once at least, under his eye and hand. This is the rite of Confirmation. It is this by which the office of a Bishop is, as it were, interpreted to the lay members of the Church. There may, it is true, be a hundred other ways in which the duties and powers entrusted to a Bishop may be seen to be blessings to the general body of the Church, as well as to the Clergy; but in the midst of these that leading act will still retain its prominence, and the other acts of a Bishop will themselves be explained and har-



monized by what is distinctly signified in Confirmation. It is, therefore, very desirable that the interest of a Confirmation should not be limited to the candidates, though to them the import of it must of course be the most solemn, but should be felt by Christians generally. The announcement that the Bishop proposes to administer this ordinance amongst us should revive in our minds those thoughts which it naturally suggests, or should excite in us a desire to understand what it means.

The best way to understand anything is *to look at it, or listen to it* attentively. We ought to use our eyes and ears, and the eyes and ears of our minds, so as to arrive at the inner meaning of things, or God's own meaning in them. We are always too ready to depend on hearsay, and content ourselves with phrases; by doing which we get only barren notions, instead of distinct and touching apprehensions. Perhaps something of this kind has happened with regard to Confirmation. Most persons, I think, if they were asked what Confirmation is, would answer that it is the taking on ourselves of the vows made for us by our godfathers and godmothers in our Baptism. Now, the ceremony of Confirmation undoubtedly includes a voluntary recognition of our Baptismal engagements; but to represent this as the essence of it is surely both

inaccurate and mischievous. It is inaccurate, because it does not correspond to the more important sense of the name Confirmation. We speak of the candidates as coming, not *to confirm*, but *to be confirmed*. Nor does this view give any explanation of the laying-on of hands, which is the outward form in this ordinance. And that the Church does not recognise this as the true meaning of Confirmation may be seen by considering the case of persons baptized as adults. They make in their own persons at their baptism the same vows as are made in the name of infants by sponsors, and therefore they need no subsequent ceremony of ratification. But they are to be confirmed as much as others. You will find, after the office for the Baptism of such as are of Riper Years, the following rubric: "It is expedient that every person thus baptized should be confirmed by the Bishop so soon after his Baptism as conveniently may be; that so he may be admitted to the Holy Communion." And elsewhere it is implied that this ordinance is rather a preliminary to the Lord's Supper than a supplement to Infant Baptism.

And it is mischievous also, because it tends to convey a discouraging and depressing view of the whole ordinance. We may hope, indeed, that we shall produce seriousness and godly fear in the minds of young people by putting before them the

awful responsibilities which they are undertaking in their own name, before God and the Church : but might they not fairly ask, “ Why, then, should we undertake these responsibilities ? ” If Confirmation lays upon the young a burden which they would not otherwise have to bear, what arguments have we to persuade them to take this burden upon them ? And if we afterwards reproach them with inconsistency, and remind them that they *voluntarily* took upon themselves the vows which we accuse them of breaking, is there not a danger that, in their hearts, if not with their lips, they may turn round upon us and complain of us for persuading them to enter into a state which they only know as one of aggravated guilt and condemnation ? Let us fairly consider, my friends, whether this would not be a plausible and even a just complaint, supposing it to be true that the *essence*, or primary idea, of Confirmation consists in our taking upon ourselves the vows which were made for us by others in our Baptism.

That mistaken view of this ordinance has grown out of a habit which perverts all ordinances,—the habit of thinking first of *our own doings and feelings*, as the essential part and ground of them. The true view of Confirmation is to be obtained by forgetting ourselves at the beginning, and observing what we see. I hope I shall show that I do not mean that

we are to be content with a merely outward and unspiritual notion of Confirmation ; what I mean is, that we should allow the outward things presented to us to guide us into their own spiritual significance.

### THE OUTWARD CEREMONY OF CONFIRMATION.

First, then, we know that it is only a *Bishop* who confirms. Now, the Bishops are the *Fathers* of the Church. They are called "Right Reverend Fathers in God ;" and we always associate a fatherly character with the person of a Bishop.

Secondly, the Bishop, when he comes to confirm, *lays his hands* on the heads of the candidates. This is a simple act, with a simple natural meaning. It has been done, in all times and places, as the sign of *parental blessing*. An interesting example of it is given us in the 48th chapter of Genesis. We read that Jacob, or Israel, was sick, and Joseph came to him, with his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. "And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. . . . And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand towards Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand

towards Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long, unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads, and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." May we not call this an act of *Confirmation*, under the old Covenant? For Isaac gave the blessing, not merely as a natural parent, but also as a minister of the Calling and the Promise, declaring God's covenanted will, by which all the nations of the earth were to be blessed.

Thus far, then, in Confirmation, we behold the Bishop, who is a Father in the Church, solemnly performing a parental act; claiming those on whom he lays his hands as sons and daughters. But now, does he claim them as *his own* sons and daughters? or does he put forward some higher claim? Let us judge by his own words. In the Service he uses the following prayer:—"Almighty and everliving God, . . . We make our humble supplications unto Thee for these Thy servants, upon whom (after the

example of Thy holy Apostles) we have now laid our hands, to certify them (by this sign) of Thy favour and gracious goodness towards them. Let Thy fatherly hand, we beseech Thee, ever be over them." Let us mark these words carefully. The Bishop's fatherly act was to certify the Confirmed of *God's* fatherhood,—of *His* "favour and gracious goodness towards them." And the Bishop prays that that "Fatherly Hand," then, as he believes, really and truly laid upon their spirits, may "ever be over them."

If we consider the matter, we shall see how consistent all this is. The Bishop is a Father in God, not in himself. He is appointed as a visible witness of the unseen living Father in heaven; not that the Church may take him for its father *instead of* God, but that through him the Church may learn to believe more really in the One Heavenly Father. Whatever, therefore, he does in his spiritual capacity ought in consistency to set forth a real fatherly feeling in the mind of God towards the Church. The Bishop is persuaded that in Confirmation he is not going beyond his warrant in certifying us, by the sign of the laying on of hands, of God's favour and gracious goodness towards us. And surely *we* are not to doubt this favour and gracious goodness,—not to question the reality and certainty of that which answers to the outward sign.

## THE STRENGTHENING SPIRIT.

But you may wonder, my dear friends, that I have not spoken yet of the gift of *the Spirit*, which is so directly connected with the laying on of hands. I have not forgotten it, nor do I wish to put it back in the least from the prominence which it unquestionably occupies in connexion with Confirmation. But I think we shall understand the gift of the Spirit all the better, if we keep firmly in mind the thought of God's fatherhood declaring itself through his servant the Bishop.

The name Confirmation, which means strengthening, undoubtedly refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Bishop says in the prayer before the laying on of hands, "*Strengthen them*, we beseech thee, O Lord, *with the Holy Ghost* the Comforter." And in the history of the Apostles, whose example the Bishop professes to follow, we find such statements as this in Acts viii. 17—"Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

Believing, as we do, that the Holy Ghost is One with the Father and the Son, it will seem to us only reasonable that a declaration of the Father should be expressly accompanied by the gift of the Spirit.

These things are so deeply important, and affect all our views and convictions so closely, that I will ask you to consider how this union of the Father and of the Spirit makes itself manifest to us in relation to the subject which is now engaging us. There are two points which especially demand our attention.

1. The Holy Spirit which was given through the Apostles, by the laying on of hands, was manifestly the Spirit as given on the Day of Pentecost. It is often asked how this special outpouring is to be distinguished from the *general* presence of the Spirit of God in previous times and with other persons. We may obtain an answer in two ways. (1) The Spirit then given was expressly the Spirit of the risen and ascended Son of God, sent from the Father. It was a Spirit of fellowship with Jesus Christ, and with His Father and ours—a Spirit whereby men became conscious that they were made sons of God in the well-beloved Son. Then, again, (2) this Spirit may be known by His works. The *result* of His coming down was that men were gathered together into a remarkable fellowship. Those who believed began immediately to live as one household. They “were together, and had all things common.” The chosen sign, moreover, of the newly-given Spirit was the speaking with tongues, which enabled men of different races to



converse together about the things which filled their hearts.

We sum up what is thus told us about the Holy Ghost of whom the Acts of the Apostles speak, by saying that He is, distinctly, *the Spirit of a Divine Family*. In other words, He is the Spirit of the Church, which is God's family. Those who received Him felt that God was a real Father, the Lord Jesus Christ a real Brother, and their fellow-men truly their brethren. This is illustrated by the first instance in which we read of the Apostles performing that act which has been handed down in the rite of Confirmation. In the 8th chapter of the Acts we are told of the first preaching of the Gospel which took place out of Jerusalem. Philip the Deacon had preached Christ in Samaria, and a great number had believed on Him. Hitherto the Church had been gathered together in one body at Jerusalem. But now there were those who professed the same faith in another city, at a considerable distance from Jerusalem. Could these form part of that close fellowship which the Spirit of the Family had taught the first members of the Church to realize? Yes, the fellowship was one which distance was not to break. The Apostles felt at once that so many as were believers in Christ must be claimed distinctly as members of the one family, and that the Father would

give them the same Spirit. They therefore sent Peter and John to Samaria, who laid their hands on the new converts, and they received the Holy Ghost.

2. But “gifts” of the Spirit are also spoken of which are not exactly identical with the Spirit Himself. “Strengthen them, we beseech thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and daily increase in them *Thy manifold gifts* of grace.” All the *powers* of men are declared to be manifestations of the Spirit; the word of knowledge and of speech, gifts of healing, discernment of spirits, are all declared to be wrought by one and the self-same Spirit. (See 1 Cor. xii. 8—11.) Here, then, are *differences*, which yet are affirmed to proceed from *one* Spirit. Can the same Spirit work one thing in one man, and another thing in another man? Undoubtedly He can, if He is the Spirit of *a Body*. For the *unity* of a Body, as we all perceive, actually results from the *diversity* of the parts or members. “If they were all one member, where were the body?” Supposing, then, that God is calling men to be one family, or, in other words, one body in Christ their Head, the Spirit, Who is the life of that family or body, must needs qualify the various members of the household differently, in order that they may perform their several parts according to their places,—in order that the eye may be an eye, and the

foot a foot. And this is the true and only explanation of the boundless variety of human gifts. Among the myriads of men, as among the leaves of a forest, no one is exactly like another, because each has a special work to do, and receives precisely those gifts which the great Lord knows to be necessary for the work which He has set.

If, then, the first Christians were taught to acknowledge the Spirit given by the laying on of hands as the author of *the various faculties and endowments* which they possessed, this would only make them feel more strongly, and not less strongly, that He was in truth the Spirit of a family, proceeding from a Father and a Son. But these faculties are only thought of as exercised, in the social body, by those who have attained to *years of discretion*. We do not think of *children* as having entered upon the use of the gifts of which we have been speaking, or as having taken independent places in the household. It is true that they need and receive the same blessed Spirit from their infancy, as their Baptism assures them; but He is not then regarded expressly as the distributor of powers, “dividing them to every man severally as He will.”

According to this view, it would be appropriate that the fatherly hands should be laid on those only who have come to years of discretion. And this, as

you are aware, is the practice of the Church. While *Baptism* is administered to unconscious infants, none are admitted to *Confirmation* but such as are considered old enough to think and act for themselves.

What a wonderful change it is when a human being passes from childhood to what are called years of discretion ! God has made the change so gradual, that we hardly notice it, but the slightest reflection will make us aware of the reality and importance of it. Now, is it not well, my dear friends, that at some period, representing as nearly as may be the time when independent responsibility is coming upon the young, they should be invited into the solemn public presence of God, to be blessed by Him as acting members of His Family, and to be taught that they receive from the Spirit of God all the gifts which are necessary for the doing of His work ? This is what the ordinance of Confirmation professes to be. The candidates, generally speaking, are approaching manhood or womanhood ; they come before the Bishop as instructed members of the Church, knowing what they say, and what is said to them ; the Bishop lays his hands on them, to certify them of God's favour and gracious goodness towards them, and prays that God will strengthen them with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and daily increase in them His manifold gifts of grace.

## THE CONFESSION MADE BY THE CANDIDATES.

The candidates are dealt with, I said, as *instructed* and *conscious* members of the Church. It is required of them that they should "*acknowledge themselves* bound to believe and to do all those things which their godfathers and godmothers in their Baptism undertook for them." This confession of theirs is sometimes misunderstood, as if the candidates then *made* themselves bound to believe and do certain things. But they do not *create* the obligation; they only "*acknowledge*" it. The duties exist, whether they are confessed or not. I am bound to be an honest man, although I may not have made any vow to be honest. And surely it is right for all, independently of any voluntary promise, to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, to believe the articles of the Christian faith, and to do God's will. The Church does not ask candidates for Confirmation to assume one jot or tittle of responsibility over and above that which belongs to them as God's redeemed creatures. But the Church would have them *aware* of this responsibility; and accordingly we clergymen are required to explain to young persons what they are made for, and what their dangers are; and the Bishop asks those who come to him whether they know their Christian calling, and desire to fulfil it.

Our English Church is, on the one hand, no friend to such vows as seem to imply that a creature of God may take upon himself what God has not laid upon him ; and, on the other hand, is peculiarly anxious that her members should be treated as voluntary, reasonable beings, and should understand as thoroughly as possible their relation to God and to one another. The confession required in the words " I do " is a proof of this anxiety, and reminds us of the awful fact that we are spiritual beings, whose *will* must be brought into harmony with our Father's will, and who are intended not to be acted upon mechanically, but to know and to love the Father of our spirits. I would not ask any young person to come to Confirmation, if I thought that the ordinance consisted in binding a new burden on the conscience. I know that the burdens of life, which come without our choice, are heavy enough ; but I am sure that they become heavier in proportion as we deny God and grope in darkness. It is my business to declare that those burdens are no more than men are able to support, when they know who has laid them on their backs, and are willing to receive the help which He is anxious to give. It is a genuine deliverance, and a deliverance which Confirmation offers, to make confession to God, and throw oneself on His Fatherly help.

Such an ordinance as this, my dear friends, ought to be—not only when it is administered to us, but whenever we think of it—fruitful of encouragement and warning to us. Let me endeavour to mark out some of its encouragements and warnings.

### LESSONS OF CONFIRMATION.

(1.) *It consecrates all our vocations.* It implies that they are Divine, and that we can only fulfil them rightly by the help of God's own Spirit. It says to the various classes of young people who come to it—to the tradesman, the mechanic, the student—to the young woman whose life is to be one of domestic occupation—to the humblest labourer—to those who, not being compelled to labour for their living, have the additional responsibility of looking carefully for the work which is certainly set them to do,—“Do not regard yourselves as either *choosing* your work, or as *driven* to it. Believe that you are *called* to it by One Who loves you. Believe that whatever your hand finds to do, provided it be innocent and honest, has God's blessing upon it. Believe that in devoting yourselves to your vocation, you are carrying out the will of your Maker. Do not therefore slide or slink or rush headlong into the business of your lives, but undertake it both humbly and boldly: humbly, be-

cause you are all only servants ; boldly, because your service is the obedience of children, and you may count on all the support which you require." Is not this view a true comfort, both for ourselves and others ? When we think of the busy millions toiling in ways so infinitely manifold that the mind wearies in contemplating them, of those who labour in the highest places and of those who labour in the lowest ; when we think of ourselves plodding along our own obscure path, is there not a relief and a joy in remembering that there is One to Whom all this variety is no tangle, for He himself ordained it—One Who keeps things from falling into utter confusion—One Who would bring all things into perfect order if we would let Him ? Will it not support us in the weariness with which we tire of the monotony or struggle against the difficulties of our daily life, if we believe what Confirmation teaches us, that the whole body would suffer if the humblest member did not do its appointed work, and that the same Spirit, who comes near to us in Confirmation, is the Life of the whole ?

(2.) Thus we go on to remember, that not only are all our respective *parts* in life sacred and honourable, but that they are parts of a *whole*. Confirmation claims our several vocations, not merely as separately blessed, but as *offices in a family*. It speaks of a



Father, of whom we are all alike children, so that we must be brothers and sisters to one another. The Spirit of whom it testifies is a Spirit of sonship and brotherhood, mighty to bind together in one those who may differ in station, in talent, in tastes, as widely as we choose to imagine. We must not forget that the Father whose hand is over us, is One who has made us His children in His Son ; and that however much we may be inclined to separate ourselves from our brethren, the Spirit bestowed upon us will enable us, if we seek His aid, to overcome all such inclinations.

(3.) Confirmation protests very strongly against low, carnal, ignoble habits, both of mind and of conduct. Such habits lie in wait to ensnare all young persons. But how should they give way to them, when they have the pure, free Spirit of God with them ? If God Himself is lifting us heavenwards to peace and joy and strength in the knowledge of Himself, and the faith of His Son Jesus Christ, shall we allow ourselves to be dragged down by our enemies into sensuality and dissipation, into weakness and defilement ? God forbid ! Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own ? For ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which

are God's. Everything corrupt, everything greedy, will grieve that Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed. The Lord has said, I will receive you and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Confirmation demands that we should judge of all things by their spiritual value, as they are related to God, and so it would preserve us from mere worldliness, as well as from sensuality. It would teach us to make truth and right our standards, and not appearance, or the opinions of men. It would encourage in us elevation and soundness of thought as to all matters, by warranting us to enter into the mind of the Spirit.

(4.) But while we are bidden to cultivate a truly spiritual tone of mind, we are warned against anything like *exclusiveness* in religion, or Pharisaism. We must not venture to *limit* the Spirit of God. Everything in Confirmation suggests the utmost largeness of view in reference to His operations. We are led to think of Him as dealing with men generally, and not with a small number only, as enabling men to do *their allotted work aright*, rather than as moving them to some special work. Practically, we all of us, I am sure, shrink from separating those

who have the Spirit into a small class, and from denying that He is given to the rest of mankind. We dare not so call good evil, as to suppose that honesty, truthfulness, kindliness, in any one whatsoever, proceed from any source but the Blessed Spirit. Let us not imagine ourselves bound, in theory, to limit the Spirit to a few; let us rejoice to think of Him as the living inspirer of all that is good and innocent in human beings; let us recognise Him in whatever enables any man to fill his place, in whatever binds spirit to spirit with the cords of love.

Such reflections as these, my dear friends, may help us to look through the outward forms of Confirmation to Him Who is our true Stay and Guide, from Whom alone proceed order and strength. When we make discoveries of our weakness and confusion, by falling before temptation, or leaving our duty undone, let us believe that such discoveries are intended to lead us to Him Who can teach and enable us. Let us believe that the Spirit of God has been given to us, and is ready to make Himself known and felt by us more and more. Let us abandon all hope or desire of putting ourselves right, or strengthening ourselves, and let us ask Him to confirm us, that His strength may be perfected in our weakness.

Especially would I urge this, with affectionate earnestness, upon the *young*. You do not yet know,

as you will some day, how weak you are in yourselves. By many falls you will be taught how difficult it is to stand upright. That these may not be fatal, that your stumbles may not be for final prostration, be persuaded to look seriously on what you have already learnt of your own frailty, and to resolve to lean on Him Who is at hand to support you. The Spirit of Him Who died for you is willing to take possession of you, to enlighten your minds, and strengthen your wills. Let Confirmation be to you an assurance of this gracious readiness. No earthly parent can so gladly give good gifts to his children as your Heavenly FATHER will give the HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask Him.

## THE LORD'S SUPPER.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

THE Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is confessedly the ordinance in which our Christian faith and worship are most conspicuously and completely represented. At first sight, indeed, it might seem as if our Christianity were most obviously marked by those regular Sunday services of prayer and preaching, which bring the largest number of Christians together, and which serve to many as the only public manifestation of their religion. But these Sunday services are matters of custom and of national arrangement; they vary much throughout Christendom, and might be changed or modified at the discretion of the Church amongst ourselves. There is but one ordinance—that of Baptism—which claims anything like an equality of rank with the Lord's Supper. But Baptism is administered to a Christian

once only in his life, and that in most cases before he reaches the age of consciousness. The Lord's Supper is a fixed universal institution ; it is social ; it is an ordinance of frequent repetition ; it embodies the most sacred facts on which the life of the Church depends. This ceremony, then, may be said to stand out prominently from amongst all the practices of the Christian Church. It is that which should excite the inquiring curiosity of non-Christians ; it is that which Christians should consider themselves bound most thoroughly to understand and appreciate.

As we saw to be the case with Baptism, the office which is used in the Church of England for the administration of the Holy Communion contains many prayers and addresses which form no part of the Sacrament itself. That which is essential to the Sacrament we find in the record of its original institution. We read in the Gospels, and in one other remarkable passage (1 Cor. xi. 23—25), that the Lord Jesus, when He was partaking with the disciples of His last supper before His betrayal, took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat ; this is my body ;" that similarly He took the cup of wine that was before Him, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it ; for this is my blood ;" and that He added, "This do in remembrance of me." The con-

secration of bread and wine to signify the Body and Blood of Christ, and the partaking of them after this consecration, constitute the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

An observer looking on at a celebration of the Holy Communion ought always to see, whatever else may be added for edification or omitted, bread and wine solemnly set apart and standing for the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and Christians partaking of them in company. Let us now follow the method which we have used in considering Baptism and Confirmation, and inquire what ideas are thus symbolized.

### THE BREAD AND THE WINE.

First, then, we see bread and wine. These, like the water used in Baptism, are very simple types. The simplicity of these symbols is worthy of remark, as being entirely in harmony with the grandeur and universality of that kingdom which Christ came to establish. The ordinances which He commanded His disciples to observe are such as appeal to the commonest human instincts. There is no country on the face of the earth to which the Gospel can penetrate, where to wash with water, to eat bread, and to drink wine, would be unknown or unintelligible acts.

What, then, are the most obvious thoughts which bread and wine would suggest? Bread, any child would tell us, is the staff of life: by eating bread, men live; it nourishes the flesh of man, turning by mysterious processes into his very substance. God gives "bread to strengthen man's heart" (Ps. civ. 15). And what is the object of wine? The same writer who speaks of bread as strengthening, speaks of wine as "making glad" the heart of man. He expresses on these points the common feeling of mankind. Wine may, no doubt, be misused, and some persons think that on this account the use of it should be abandoned altogether. But even if they were right—whether the common notion be founded in error or not—it is certain that wine has everywhere been regarded as having the power to stimulate and refresh the bodily nature. "The Lord awaked," said the Psalmist, "like a giant refreshed with wine." (Ps. lxxviii. 66). "What meanest thou by these?" asked David when Ziba brought him loaves of bread and a bottle of wine. "The bread," answered Ziba, "is for the young men to eat, and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink." (2 Sam. xvi. 2.)

These ideas are perfectly simple and universal for all races of men. The animal nature will always and everywhere crave nourishment and refreshment.



Bread and wine are the simplest objects of these natural cravings, and represent whatever would satisfy them.

Here, then, we have the plain ideas which stand in the forefront of this Sacrament. They seem almost too obvious to state thus emphatically: but let us take care not to discard or forget them. The next step in our observation is to notice, that the Bread and Wine are solemnly taken up as symbols or signs. In the Sacrament they represent, or stand for, the Body and Blood of Christ. The Church of Rome, as you are aware, asserts that they *become* the Body and Blood of Christ. We shrink from the confusion which appears to us to be involved in such language, and say that the Bread and Wine, instead of having their own nature changed, are made, in virtue of this nature, the tokens and interpreters of those unseen realities. Their nature is to nourish and refresh; and therefore they represent the nourishing and refreshing properties which belong to the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Now, when we speak of body and blood, or flesh and blood, we always mean to bring up the thought of a living human person. "The blood is the life;" when we connect the blood with the body, we imply a real living person, with the common feelings and qualities of our race. The Body and Blood of Christ

would therefore naturally denote to us, unless we have any strong reason for taking some other view, Christ Himself as possessed of a true, living, human nature. We do not find any meaning different from this suggested to us in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; but by the breaking of the Bread and pouring of the Wine, which are made to represent the breaking of the Body and shedding of the Blood, the thought of Christ's *Death* is associated with our thought of Him. The Living Man, submitting to Death, surviving Death, is the unseen reality presented to us in the Sacrament. The Crucified Son of God, He in whom men were made, who died and lives in their behalf, is set forth as truly present under symbols of nourishment and refreshment.

Of these signs the communicants partake. They eat and drink together. The Church has been careful to preserve the *social* character of this ordinance, implied in the name by which it is most commonly known, the Holy Communion. The feast which the Lord Jesus instituted was one of fellowship and union. He and his disciples were eating at supper together, when He blessed the bread and the cup. He said, according to one Evangelist, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves." (St. Luke xxii. 17.) St. Paul appeals to the witness for Christian unity supplied by this Sacrament, when he says, "We,

being many, are one bread, and one body : for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. x. 17.) He goes on to remind his readers that the joining in religious or sacrificial meals was always understood as associating the partakers with the divinity to whom the feast belonged. Eating and drinking have always been pledges of fellowship. St. Paul says of the old Jewish sacrifices, "Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" and therefore he warns Christians not to take part in the sacrificial banquets of the heathen. "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God : and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils : ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." (1 Cor. x. 18, 20, 21.) The communicants, then, eat together of the same bread, and drink from the one cup, as setting forth the Body and the Blood of Christ. Expressing in words what these symbols no less plainly convey, the Church declares that Jesus Christ then and there gives Himself as a Living Person to be the nourishment and the refreshment of those who will spiritually receive Him.

## THE MYSTERY OF THIS SACRAMENT.

Here, then, we arrive at a confessed mystery ; but it is a great mistake to suppose that this mystery is the peculiar enigma of the rite which embodies it. The Kingdom of Heaven was not established for the purpose of baffling men's understandings. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is mysterious, because it professes to give form to a mystery which lies at the very base of human existence. According to this Sacrament, man has two lives, the one outward and visible, the other inward and spiritual. The life which we can see and touch is a kind of likeness of the life which is beyond our senses. The one life, we can perceive, is sustained and stimulated by the bread and wine of our daily food. The other, the Sacrament tells us, is imparted to us by that Son of God in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

This is, indeed, a wonderful mystery, passing our comprehension ; God forbid that we should treat it lightly, as a common thing ; but it is the mystery, let me repeat it, of all human life. The law of the spiritual life, of that life which blossoms and fructifies in all the gracious feelings and all the true acts of men, is declared in this Sacrament ; man receives this life as a gift from Christ. He Himself is the Root of all that is truly living in men, of all humility, and

love, and courage, of all that is manly, and womanly, and childlike, of all that is not perishable and corrupting.

We must hold fast by this thought—the thought of life. We do not know how to explain life, except by its most remarkable effects. Sometimes we think of it chiefly as a faculty of enjoying; sometimes as a force to resist; most commonly as an active principle of union and harmony. If we make use of these explanations, the Sacrament tells us that the capacity of being thankful and rejoicing is given to us directly by our Divine Head; that from Him all our strength to resist temptation and retain self-command is derived; that His Life in us binds together and harmonizes all our various parts and endowments. And it is one and the same Life which is imparted thus mysteriously to the many, so that they are necessarily joined together, inasmuch as they partake of a common nature, of the same Body and Blood.

Do you believe this mystery then, or disbelieve it? You may look at it apart from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which does not by any means *create* the mystery, but only *embodies* it. We have a hundred inducements to deny, or doubt, or forget it. As surely as there are causes of darkness, and pride, and misery in the world, so surely are there difficulties in believing in the Source of all light and salvation. If

you deny this mystery, the Divine Life of the world, you may avoid some difficulties ; you will unresistingly admit visible things to be what they claim to be, your masters ; you will be under no obligation to offend the world by running counter to its maxims ; you will be able to join the many wise men after the flesh in doing homage to self-interest as the governing power in human life. But you will find it hard to be consistent. You will have to look down upon the best of men as fools ; you will have to conclude that the book which extorts the veneration of all men, puts forth as its central principle a radical delusion ; you will have to incur all the inconveniences of selfishness in this life, and to put away, as well as you can, all thoughts of another.

But if you incline to the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ the Crucified, the Son of the Living God, as the Light of the world and the Life of men ; if you perceive this to be an eternal reality, which would equally be a reality if the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper had never been instituted ; if you find that our present existence, and the hope of a future, are alike illumined and explained by this discovery ; then, while innumerable other results will follow, this will certainly be one, that you will turn with the liveliest interest to that ordinance, which professes to connect itself so closely with the wonderful fact

before which you bow. "Did the Saviour Himself really institute this ordinance?" you will ask. You will never satisfy your wonder at the gracious condescension and wisdom which established it. That in the midst of the cares and distractions of human life this standard of peace and unity should be continually lifted up; that through the wild discords of human passions this inner harmony should never cease to be sounded; that while men are forgetting the one Rock of their strength, and falling into vain strife, their Maker should invite them to come together to meet Him, and to be fed by Him with the food they need for their support, and the drink they crave for their delight; this will seem one of the most precious of blessings, worthy of the Love of Him who died on the cross.

"WHY SHOULD I COME TO THE LORD'S SUPPER?"

As for asking, "Why should we come to the Lord's Supper?"—I trust the very question itself will sound to you like an affront and an absurdity. A man believes, we say, these two things, that all the good that there is in men springs from the Life of Christ, and that Christ has promised, at certain appointed seasons, to meet companies of His followers and feed them with the Bread of Life; and is it asked, why

he should accept the invitation? We shall rather wonder on what conceivable pretext he could decline accepting it. And we shall rightly wonder. The more you think of the matter, my friends, the more you will see it in this light. You will be obliged to confess that for one who acknowledges Christ as the Saviour, it is the simplest and most natural act in the world to come to the Lord's Supper; and that every sort of reluctance to come indicates precisely some amount of disbelief in the Gospel.

This Sacrament serves therefore as the touchstone of a true knowledge of God. If, *when the Sacrament is rightly understood*, it is neglected, we know the evil to be not barely neglect of an ordinance of God, but some want of sure belief concerning God Himself and His Gospel. I entreat you to reflect upon this, for the sake of your own truth and spiritual health. Let every one be sure that it is impossible to be an intelligent Christian disciple, growing in the love and knowledge of God, and to remain absent from the Lord's Table: and this, not only because the natural sustenance of the Christian Life is imparted there, but because an intelligent desire to come near to God would infallibly draw a worshipper to that place of meeting with Him. I do not mean to judge or condemn in particular cases: there may be prejudices and errors belonging to the region of the under-



standing which may keep many a humble and contrite heart from the communion of the faithful, and which the Almighty searcher of hearts will not be extreme to mark. God preserve us men from judging harshly where He is tender and considerate. But I feel as if I could not state too emphatically what I am now saying, that there must be either some error of the understanding or some unbelief in the heart, to account for the absence from the Holy Communion of any *who profess to believe in and care about the Gospel of Jesus Christ*. And neither error nor unbelief ought to be allowed to rest undisturbed within us.

Permit me, therefore, to deal more closely with some representations which our deceitful hearts are apt to make to themselves.

#### EXCUSES FOR NOT COMMUNICATING.

1. I can imagine one and another saying within themselves, "But what *necessity* can there be for attending the Holy Communion? I know that the presence of God is not limited to that Sacrament. He pardons sin, I am assured, whenever it is repented of: He gives His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Why can I not serve God, and offer up my prayers to Him and read my Bible, and thus grow in grace and be an acceptable worshipper, without coming

regularly, or coming at all, to the Communion? What can I get there, which I cannot get elsewhere?" I do not know, my friends, that we should be right in even attempting to answer such questions directly. And I am ready to explain why. Perhaps I can do so best by means of an illustration. Let me appeal to a parent. You have a family of little children. You love them, and are continually occupied about their interests. You desire their affection and their confidence, and wish them to be united as a family to their parents and among themselves. You do not refuse to let them come to you one by one. You do not dispense your kindness and your forgiveness by wholesale only, at particular intervals and on certain formal conditions. But you do call them together about you at particular seasons; you think it good and pleasant to treat them as a family, and to show particular tokens, in words and acts, of your undivided affection to them all. You feel it to be a natural duty, in the morning or in the evening, at some stated times, to do or say something which shall be taken as a parental kindness embracing the whole family alike. Now, suppose one of your children to grow speculative, and to ask, "Why should I go with my brothers and sisters to receive my father's blessing or my mother's kiss? What do I *get* by it? Prove to me the special

advantages of this ceremony, when I am sure of my father's love independently of it, and can honour him in a more real way than by any outward sign." Would your heart, my friend, tolerate such questioning? Would you not consider it a symptom of rising conceit or undutifulness? Should you wish to hear any one undertake seriously to answer it?

There is an objection of the same kind, and surely an infinitely stronger one, to any speculations about the good to be got by coming to the Holy Communion. If there is something degrading in asking curiously, with regard to any duty, What shall I get by it?—still more is such treatment degrading to the most sacred and delicate of all duties. We can see, it is true, and we may well bless and praise God for it, countless advantages springing from the fulfilment of every duty. But it is not the less a bad habit to make these advantages the ground of our doing it. Just as I should not like to persuade a mother to be a true mother to her children by laying out before her the advantages to herself of such conduct, although I firmly believe in these advantages, so I should not feel it to be quite reverent or right to persuade men to an act of dutiful, loving, thankful, homage to their Heavenly Father, by calculating the spiritual profit to be made by it. Might we not justly fear that any one coming to the fulfilment of

deep and mysterious duties with the thought of profit on the mind, would be so far hindered in the simple and reverent discharge of them? The spirit of a little child is not expert in the calculation of gain. If our minds are filled with the thought of the Love of God in Christ towards us and our brethren, and of our own entire dependence on Him, will not that be better than if we could establish the most irresistible case in proof of the advantages of Communion?

2. But another reflection is more likely, perhaps, to arise in the minds of my readers. You do not doubt the authority and the worth of the Sacrament, nor do you cherish a speculative disposition concerning it, but for the very reason that you are so reverential towards it, you *shrink* from it. You shrink from what? "From making such a profession of religion," perhaps. Pardon my asking you to put away, once and for ever, such a phrase. We find nothing about professing religion in the Bible; the very words hardly occur there; and, surely, we who boast so much about the Bible are bound to take care not to let our whole conduct towards God and our neighbours turn upon language foreign to the Scriptures. You are not invited to profess any religion; you are invited to come and receive blessing with your brethren from your Almighty Maker and

Friend. God forbid you should profess to be a better man than your neighbours. You do not make a profession of being more honest in your business, or more liberal with your money than others; but yet, I suppose, you do not shrink from paying your bills or your subscriptions, through a fear of doing damage by some inconsistency to the cause of honesty or charity. There is more excuse, however, it must be admitted, for such an objection in the actual opinions of society than there is in reason. Unhappily, through that blighting influence which Pharisaism has shed upon our habits of thought, the Sacrament in which the love of Christ comes forth to cheer and sustain the drooping soul, has been turned into a human act of ostentation. But no scruples of ours ought to be allowed to support themselves on such a perversion.

There is another fear, however, deserving of all respect and indulgence, which keeps many absent from Communion. They shrink from coming, unworthy sinners as they are, into that solemn Presence. They do not think themselves fit, and are afraid they might be punished, perhaps by still greater coldness and deadness, for such audacity. How reasonable and becoming this reluctance appears! And let me not insinuate any doubt that very often it is the feeling of humble and reverent minds, of those whom

the meek and lowly King is most truly feeding with His own spirit. But we must not let this fear pass unquestioned. It may, perhaps, be a subtle snare of the adversary provided for such minds. We do not think, we say, that such sinners as we are, such poor irresolute Christians, are worthy to come into the awful Presence of God. Certainly we are not worthy. I waive asking the question, Who is worthy? and I say for all who regard themselves, and justly, as weak, cold, unfaithful, "How, indeed, shall we come to appear before the presence of God?" But is it only at the altar that God is present? Are we out of His presence at this moment? Is He not looking into our hearts now, and will He not hear if we speak to Him? Is He not about our bed and our board, spying out all our ways? Is such language idle, or is it simply, absolutely, *true*? Because if it is, our unworthiness makes us not only unfit to come to the Holy Communion, but, without any straining or forcing, as surely as the simplest truth is true, unfit to exist at all. So we are; quite unworthy to live, if we are to estimate our claims in the sight of God. And yet we do live; our Maker permits us to live and keeps us in existence. Why should it not also be, that while we are quite unworthy to come to the Lord's Table, God yet invites us thither? I have not the least wish to persuade any one that he

is good enough to receive the Body and Blood of Christ; I would rather convince him, if I could, that he is bad enough to want that Life.

But you are not quite satisfied. You think there is a difference between the presence of God in its general sense and His presence in a Sacrament. Let us grant that there is a difference; there is one undoubtedly to us, though it cannot be in the nature of God Himself. But how do we recognise this difference? what is there peculiar in that presence of God which we acknowledge in the Holy Communion? It cannot be that He is *more* present; if He is searching the deeps of our hearts now, He cannot be at any other time nearer to us.

But in the Lord's Supper there is, as we have observed, a solemn presentation of the mystery of our Redemption, a setting forth of the dying love of the Son of God. The deepest, most wonderful act of Divine love—the mystery of our Maker suffering with us and for us—is what imparts its special awe and sacredness to that Sacrament. The love of Christ which strove, and humbled itself, and suffered, and died, on our behalf, there renews itself to us. It is no wonder such love should be awful to us; nothing else, no fierceness or blasting fury, could be so truly awful. But let us remember that it is love, and not hatred, which meets us in the Communion,

and is dreadful there. And it is the same love, the love of the same Being, which meets us everywhere. It is the love manifested in Christ which daily keeps and preserves us, which strengthens us in the morning and forgives us at night, which surrounds us with blessings on every side. All the providence of our lives, all innocent joys and wholesome restraints, are gifts of the redeeming love of God. Therefore if we show our fear of God by standing afar from His Altar, consistency would require that we should shrink away from all other manifestations of the same Nature. We should fear to hold fellowship with God by day or by night, because He is Love; we should fear to ask or to receive our daily bread at His hands; we should cower under His sunshine, instead of rejoicing in it, because He is Love. There might be more unreasonable things than such terror; is it not astonishing that selfish hearts, hardened against love, *can* dare to meet the countless tokens of God's Love? But, at any rate, let us not delude ourselves with the thought that the Awful Nature which comes to receive us in the Communion, leaves us to ourselves elsewhere. No, it still haunts us, that reigning, omnipotent Love; wrathful and haughty always against pride and cruelty and hardness, compassionate always to humility and weakness and human frailty.



## THE SPIRIT OF THE HUMBLE COMMUNICANT.

As erring children of God, endowed with the powers of choice, we stand between sin and grace. Whilst sin is daily tempting us, God's mercy, on the other hand, encompasses us on every side, and seeks to draw us away from the dominion of sin. If we yield to the attractions of grace and have some desire to be delivered from sin, we want nothing more to make us fit to come to the Holy Communion. We do not need to forget our daily toils and cares. Believe, my dear friends, that this sacrament is not out of harmony with the true principles of our common life. The spirit of it, the spirit of sacrifice, is that through which we should realize perfect freedom. A name which has been much used for the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, shows us how naturally this ordinance connects itself with the temper in which our daily life should be spent. The word Eucharist means Thanksgiving; and the Lord's Supper, when so entitled, is recognised as the great thanksgiving-service of the Church, in which its deepest adoration should be offered to God for the most precious gifts of His love. Ought we ever to plead that we are not prepared to join in a public expression of thankfulness to God for His redeeming mercies? The deadness of

our hearts ought not reasonably to prevent us from using language of praise and of repentance, transcending any feelings of which we may be conscious. We go up to the Holy Communion in order that the Spirit of the one Body may pass into and animate its unworthiest members ; in order that we may learn to feel as we ought to do. Let us avoid the mistake of supposing that we are to bring everything to this Sacrament and to receive nothing.

The communicant who has really entered into the eucharistic spirit will find himself strengthened for every duty and every trial. The blessed life is that of fellowship with the Son of God. The humble follower of Jesus Christ is encouraged to believe that he has a fellowship with his Master, closer than any words or symbols can express, and that through trust and prayer and resolute obedience he may realize the blessings of that fellowship. The Lord's Supper is both a witness and a channel of this communion ; a pledge to assure us of it, and a means by which we receive it. Let us behold in it the law and principle of our lives. Let us seek to be drawn closer in faith and sympathy and likeness to Him who died and rose again for us. " We," says St. Paul, speaking of the union between Christ and His Church, " are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." It is because we have this membership that we are invited

to feed on His Body and Blood in the Lord's Supper. No outward ordinance could possibly create such a union, but it is in the power of a true ordinance of Christ to show it forth ; and, when spiritually received, to cherish in our hearts its vital force. If we believe, then, that we are creatures of God, and that all our duties and joys and trials are assigned to us by His Providence, let us rejoice to bring that ordinance in which Christ has taught us the secret of our strength, into the closest contact with our daily experience. Let us expect that the Sacrament and our common life will react upon each other ; that the Sacrament will make our life the purer, and that our life will make the Sacrament more real.

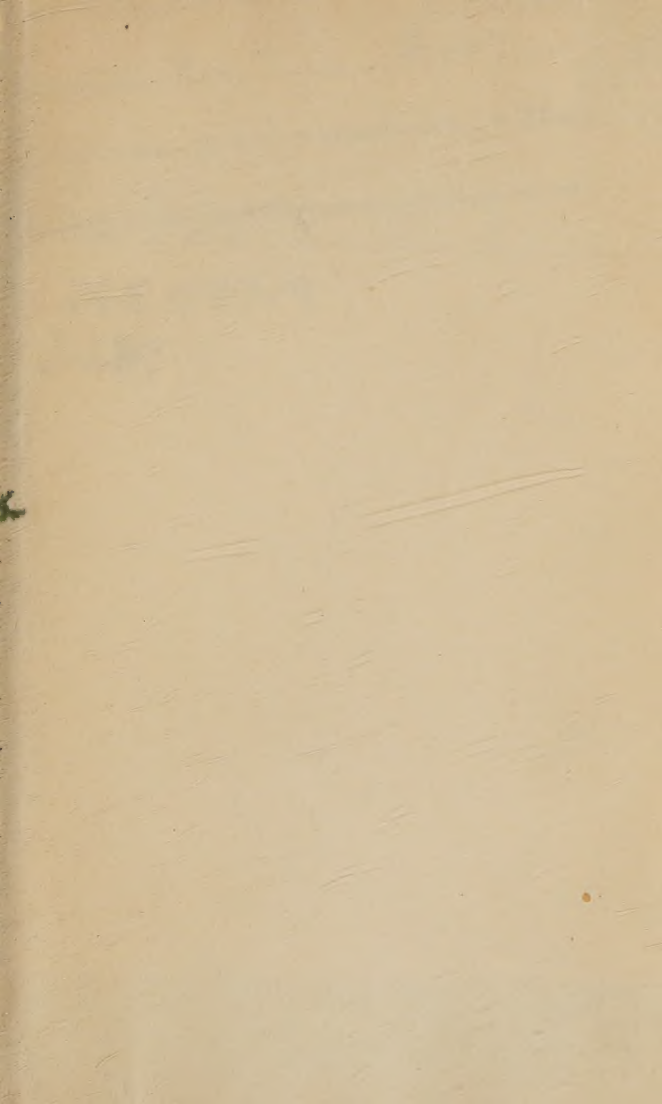
The most direct bearing of the Holy Communion upon our practice is in the promoting of mutual charity. You remember how expressly we are warned that those who cherish malice ought not to come to the Lord's Table. Everyone can understand how profane a thing it must be for one who is deliberately nourishing ill will in his heart to affect to come to a festival of sacrifice and communion and to pray for the spirit of unity. But it is not intended that those persons should absent themselves from the Lord's Supper who are conscious of many jealousies and resentments, which they find it difficult to repress. Oh, how much unhappiness in life is to be traced to those

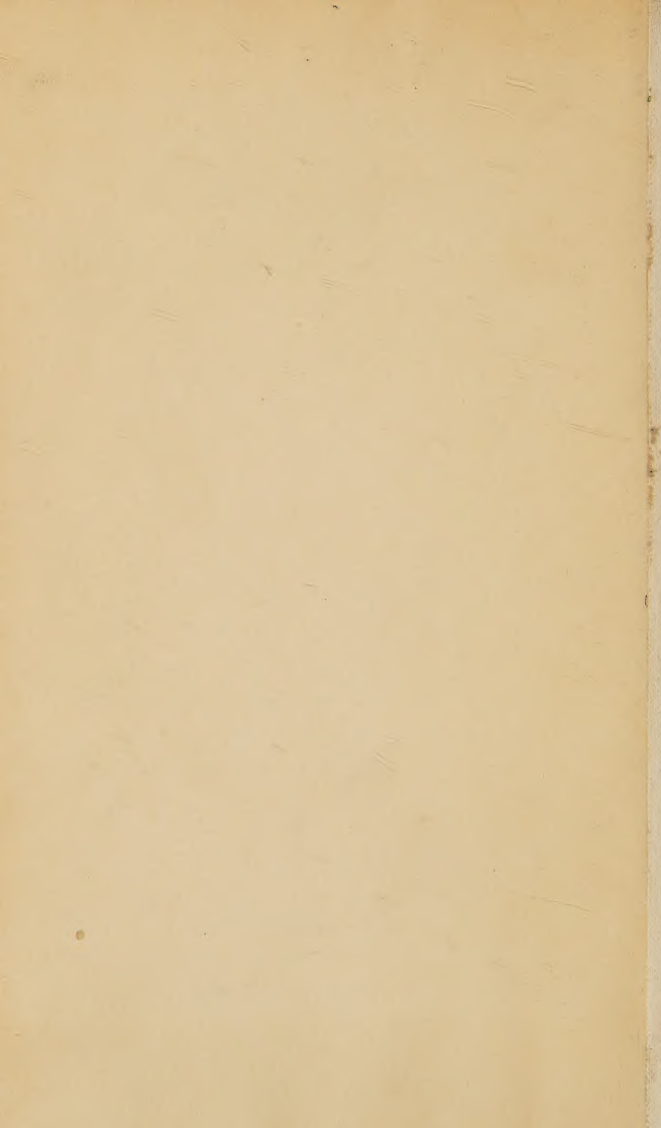
unworthy tempers from which it is the purpose of the Holy Communion to purify us ! It is natural to us all to think ourselves slighted ; to suspect unkindness where it is not meant ; to look upon some neighbour as standing in the way of our own advancement or enjoyment. Let the consciousness of these temptations and of our own weakness lead us, in sincerity and humility, to the altar at which we may contemplate Christ's perfect sacrifice, and seek to offer ourselves in its strength to His Father and ours. May our minds be filled with higher thoughts, with nobler aims, with more generous and thankful emotions, than those which our petty discords would generate. May heaven descend to earth, and earth be raised to heaven, before our eyes, in the sacred person of Him who died and who lives for evermore. Then the parting benediction of the Church will rest upon us, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

THE END











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Davies, Rev. J. L. D 287

Baptism, confirmation + the  
Lord's Supper.

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